Understanding How to Protect Access Ports on EX Series Switches from Common Attacks

Port security features can protect the Juniper Networks EX Series Ethernet Switch against various types of attacks. Protection methods against some common attacks are:

Mitigation of Ethernet Switching Table Overflow Attacks

In an overflow attack on the Ethernet switching table, an intruder sends so many requests from new MAC addresses that the table cannot learn all the addresses. When the switch can no longer use information in the table to forward traffic, it is forced to broadcast messages. Traffic flow on the switch is disrupted, and packets are sent to all hosts on the network. In addition to overloading the network with traffic, the attacker might also be able to sniff that broadcast traffic.

To mitigate such attacks, configure both a MAC limit for learned MAC addresses and some specific allowed MAC addresses. Use the MAC limit feature to control the total number of MAC addresses that can be added to the Ethernet switching table for the specified interface or interfaces. By setting the MAC addresses that are explicitly allowed, you ensure that the addresses of network devices whose network access is critical are guaranteed to be included in the Ethernet switching table. See Example: Configuring MAC Limiting, Including Dynamic and Allowed MAC Addresses, to Protect the Switch from Ethernet Switching Table Overflow Attacks.

Mitigation of Rogue DHCP Server Attacks

If an attacker sets up a rogue DHCP server to impersonate a legitimate DHCP server on the LAN, the rogue server can start issuing leases to the network's DHCP clients. The information provided to the clients by this rogue server can disrupt their network access, causing DoS. The rogue server might also assign itself as the default gateway device for the network. The attacker can then sniff the network traffic and perpetrate a man-in-the-middle attack—that is, it misdirects traffic intended for a legitimate network device to a device of its choice.

To mitigate a rogue DHCP server attack, set the interface to which that rogue server is connected as untrusted. That action will block all ingress DHCP server messages from that interface. See Example: Configuring a DHCP Server Interface as Untrusted to Protect the Switch from Rogue DHCP Server Attacks.

Protection Against ARP Spoofing Attacks

In ARP spoofing, an attacker sends faked ARP messages on the network. The attacker associates its own MAC address with the IP address of a network device connected to the switch. Any traffic sent to that IP address is instead sent to the attacker. Now the attacker can create various types of mischief, including sniffing the packets that were meant for another host and perpetrating man-in-the middle attacks. (In a man-in-the-middle attack, the attacker intercepts messages between two hosts, reads them, and perhaps alters them, all without the original hosts knowing that their communications have been compromised.)

To protect against ARP spoofing on your switch, enable both DHCP snooping and dynamic ARP inspection (DAI). DHCP snooping builds and maintains the DHCP snooping table. That table contains the MAC addresses, IP addresses, lease times, binding types, VLAN information, and interface information for the untrusted interfaces on the switch. DAI uses the information in the DHCP snooping table to validate ARP packets. Invalid ARP packets are blocked.

See Example: Configuring DHCP Snooping and DAI to Protect the Switch from ARP Spoofing Attacks.

Protection Against DHCP Snooping Database Alteration Attacks

In an attack designed to alter the DHCP snooping database, an intruder introduces a DHCP client on one of the switch's untrusted access interfaces that has a MAC address identical to that of a client on another untrusted port. The intruder acquires the DHCP lease, which results in changes to the entries in the DHCP snooping table. Subsequently, what would have been valid ARP requests from the legitimate client are blocked.

To protect against this type of alteration of the DHCP snooping database, configure MAC addresses that are explicitly allowed on the interface. See Example: Configuring Allowed MAC Addresses to Protect the Switch from DHCP Snooping Database Alteration Attacks.

Protection Against DHCP Starvation Attacks

In a DHCP starvation attack, an attacker floods an Ethernet LAN with DHCP requests from spoofed (counterfeit) MAC addresses so that the switch's trusted DHCP servers cannot keep up with requests from legitimate DHCP clients on the switch. The address space of those servers is completely used up, so they can no longer assign IP addresses and lease times to clients. DHCP requests from those clients are either dropped—that is, the result is a denial of service (DoS)—or directed to a rogue DHCP server set up by the attacker to impersonate a legitimate DHCP server on the LAN.

To protect the switch from DHCP starvation attacks, use the MAC limiting feature. Specify the maximum number of MAC addresses that the switch can learn on the access interfaces to which those clients connect. The switch's DHCP server or servers will then be able to supply the specified number of IP addresses and leases to those clients and no more. If a DHCP starvation attack occurs after the maximum number

of IP addresses has been assigned, the attack will fail. See Example: Configuring MAC Limiting to Protect the Switch from DHCP Starvation Attacks.

Related Topics

- Understanding DHCP Snooping for Port Security on EX Series Switches
- Understanding DAI for Port Security on EX Series Switches
- Understanding MAC Limiting and MAC Move Limiting for Port Security on EX Series Switches
- Understanding Trusted DHCP Servers for Port Security on EX Series Switches
- Configuring Port Security (CLI Procedure)
- Configuring Port Security (J-Web Procedure)

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